DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 255 JC 770 094

AUTHOR	Davidson, Judy
TITLE	Notes on the Student Experience. Research Report No. 2.
INSTITUTION	Cypress Coll., Calif.
PUB DATE	Jun 76
NOTE	31p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Environment; Community Colleges; *Educational Anthropology; Field Studies; *Junior Colleges; Junior College Students; Observation; Research Methodology; Role Perception; *Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; *Student College Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Cypress College; *Participant Observation

ABSTRACT

This report describes several facets of students' experiences at Cypress College as viewed through the eyes of students. The methodology used in this case study was participant-observation, with observations made over a period of months, in as many parts of the campus as possible, and at random times during the day. The aim of this approach was to allow collection of information that would permit reporting of students' perceptions, whether such perceptions were "really" correct or not. It should be noted that the student perceptions described in this report are those of ordinary students, who were not outstanding in any way. Among the many perceptions of the college by students were: the physical plant and layout of the campus was both a source of aggravation and a pleasant experience; the faculty/administrator/staff person was accorded a higher status than was the student; administrators were persons to be avoided and were generally viewed as threatening; the student was, to a certain degree, "invisible" to other non-students; and, students perceived the "House Plan" of the college as a method of organization that permitted decentralized, more personal sites for meetings, activities, record-keeping, and college counseling. A bibliography pertinent to ethnography is attached. (JDS)

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NOTES ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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Institutional Research Officer

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Research Report #2
June, 1976

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JC 770 094

RESEARCHER'S STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

I certify that the data contained herein are accurate and unbiased to the best of my knowledge and research abilities. I further certify that I have the sole responsibility for the content of this report and for any errors. I further certify that this research was carried out in full accordance with ethical standards concerning human subjects.

Judy Davidson
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction ..... Page 1

2. The Physical Plant 5

3. The Invisible Student 9

4. The Differential Status System 12

5. Student Perceptions of Administration 18

6. Student Perceptions of the House Plan 20

7. Afterword 23

Bibliography B1

1. Introduction

This report is based on field notes compiled over a period of several months from observations and conversations. Much has been written about the sociological-anthropological method of participant observation (Berk, 1970; Denzin, 1970; Epstein, 1967; Erikson, 1967; Garfinkel, 1967; Gillin, 1949; Goldschmidt, 1972; Hsu, 1969; Jarvie, 1969; Jongman, 1967; Kroeber, 1952; Lofland, 1971; Malinowski, 1967; McCall and Simmons, 1969; McSweeney, 1973; Pelto, 1970; Plotnicov, 1973; Psathas, 1968; Radin, 1966; Rohner, 1973; Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1951; Scott, 1965; Spencer, 1954; Stocking, 1974; Williams, 1967. For good examples of actual ethnographies, see Becker, et. al., 1961; Becker, 1963; Cavan, 1966; Davis, 1959; Davis, 1968; Finestone, 1957; Gans, 1962, 1967; Goffman, 1961a; Laird, 1975; Liebow, 1968; Lofland, 1970; Malinowski, 1932, 1935; Matthieson, 1961, 1962; Maurer, 1955; Miner, 1939; Rechy, 1967; Scott, 1968; Sudnow, 1965, 1967; Whyte, 1955; Whylie, 1961. For a philosophical background, see Heidegger, 1929, 1963, 1968; Husserl, 1958, 1960, 1964a, 1964b; Schutz, 1932, 1962-66, 1970, 1973); therefore, the technical details of the methodology will not be discussed in this report. The reader should remember that any single method of research has both inherent advantages and disadvantages, and that therefore the best approach to a problem is necessarily a multi-method approach. For this reason, it was felt that survey research alone would be insufficient and should be supplemented with research using a different approach.[1] The approach

[1] Conversely, of course, participant observation research alone would be insufficient.

chosen in this particular case was that of participant observation.

Observations were made in as many parts of the campus as possible, and at random times during the day in order to prevent the introduction of possible bias from observing only at one time during the day. Sometimes but not always I dressed as a student, not for the purpose of passing myself off as a student, but for the purpose of being less conspicuous. Several House advisors had recommended to me dressing as a student for this reason. At no time, however, did I pretend to actually be a student; if asked, or if it ever came up naturally in the conversation, I would state who I was and what, in general, my research involved.[2] I also sat in on some classes (with the full knowledge and permission of the instructor, of course).

The end result of participant observation research should be an ethnography, i.e., a written description of the culture or subculture, and ideally speaking, a good ethnography should give the reader, in addition to objective information about the culture, the subjective feeling of what it is like to be a member of that culture. This report, however, is in no way meant to be read as an ethnography, since it does not contain complete information about the students' day-to-day lives but rather only a portion of it, i.e., that portion spent on campus. I would hope, however, that it does nonetheless give the reader some feeling

[2]This is an ethical requisite, but it also turns out to be rather sound methodological for the following reason: if you, the researcher, try to pass as a member, and you are successful, then the real members of the culture may not tell you anything about that culture, since they assume you already know; if, on the other hand, you let them know that you are an interested outsider who professes to know nothing about their culture, they will usually talk your ears off in an effort to be helpful to you.

of what it is like to be a student here. This report cannot completely describe the experience, of course, since I obviously would not be able to describe what it is like, for example, to have to do the required homework. For another example, many of the students at Cypress College work (Davidson, 1976), but since I could not follow them to their places of work, I cannot describe what it is like to attend classes all day and then go to work for eight hours (although I can get verbal reports). Within these limitations, however, this report will hopefully provide some insight into the student experience.

There is yet another caution for the reader, which is also a general anthropological concern, and it is the following: Given that the ethnography attempts to describe the culture and impart the subjective experience of living in that culture, for which members of that culture is that ethnography valid? In traditional anthropological research, the anthropologist typically relied on a few members of the culture with whom he or she had built a good rapport. The methodological problem for the anthropologist then became that of sampling bias: had the anthropologist obtained his data from "typical" members of the culture, or were his informants in actuality deviants who had given him information about a deviant subculture (the extreme example would be if the anthropologist had talked only to someone who was in fact defined as psychotic by that culture). Analogously, I obviously have not talked to all students here; furthermore, I have probably associated mostly with younger students, between 18 and about 22 or 23 years of age. Furthermore, the students I have talked to have been typically those not involved in student government or who are campus leaders

in some other way. Furthermore, because I am female, rather colorless, and tend to blend into the crowd, the experiences I have had would obviously be those of a student who did not stand out in any particular way. The observations in this report would therefore not hold for students actively involved in student government, BMOC's, or other kinds of student leaders.

The observations contained in this report fall into two general categories: (1) Experiential observations, based on what I saw or what was reported to me, from the student's point of view, and (2) "Second-order" observations (for lack of a better term), or what I observed as student reactions to me as a member of the staff. Usually the observations in this report will consist of the former type; when they consist of the latter they will be specifically marked as such.

There is one final reading direction: This report is an attempt to describe some but not all parts of the student experience at Cypress <u>from the student's point of view</u>, regardless of whether or not the student's point of view is correct or incorrect. That is, in dealing with perceptions, it is largely irrelevant whether or not these perceptions are "really" correct; they are the bases for behavior and should therefore be dealt with in that way. It would probably be best when reading this report to suspend one's own ideas of what is correct, incorrect, proper, or improper, and to try instead to see through the student's eyes.

2. The physical plant

The student's first contact with the College is the parking lot, and his or her first experience every day is that of finding a parking place. Competition for parking places in certain lots is fierce between 9 a.m. and noon, particularly on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Many students find it unfair that although the faculty and staff pay the same amount for parking as do students, they have special spaces marked off for them, and the student will be ticketed if he parks in these spaces, even though there may be no other place to park. This is a minor source of annoyance when there are other places to park; it becomes a major annoyance when the lot is full except for the staff parking places. Feelings range from vague apprehension at not immediately finding a place to rage after looking for several minutes and coming to the realization that one will have to pay to get out of this parking lot in order to try to find a place in another lot; hence the broken or bent exit gates and also the feeling that the particular student who breaks them is not really doing anything wrong.[3] Occasionally, the same student will "run the gate" several days in a row until a guard is stationed there, or until he is she is caught. Again, there is the feeling among some students that such a person is not doing anything wrong and in fact may be doing something admirable.

The College was designed via the "bi-level" concept; whether or not the student has abstract knowledge of this concept, he or she nonetheless directly experiences it. The upper level and the lower level appear at least in some

[3]Note to the reader: Please remember to suspend your value judgments and to try to see the situation through the student's eyes.

places to be completely different campuses, and therefore one of the by-products of the bi-level concept is that the campus is experienced as being larger than it actually is. The two campuses present intriguing interactional possibilities; it is possible, for example, to pass somebody on campus and never know it. This presents both difficulties in trying to find someone and opportunities in trying to avoid someone.

Externally, the Houses appear to be quite similar; it is not until one goes inside that the differences appear. A couple of the Houses, Bernstein and Einstein, create unique atmospheres, where the atmosphere is an interaction of physical and socio-cultural factors. These two Houses, once the student is inside them, give the impression of being more than just a classroom building. The other Houses give this impression to lesser extents, again because of a combination of physical and socio-cultural factors. Some of these factors can only be instantiated here; first of all, the physical arrangement of the various components of each House plays a role in determining the nature of the interactional patterns. For example, in Bernstein House, one must walk past the snack bar area in order to get from one part of the House to another. What this means is that the probability of interpersonal contact and interaction is increased. Furthermore, in Bernstein House, Division offices are on the upper level and House offices are on the lower level; this means that the student may have business on both levels and thereby may pass through all parts of the House, thereby again increasing the probability of interpersonal contact and interaction. In contrast, in Muir-Twain House, all House and Division offices are on the upper level; this means that if a student has business in either or both

of these places, he need go to only the upper level.[4] For another example, in Einstein House, the snack bar is more or less tucked away into a corner of the building, such that one doesn't routinely have to pass by it in order to get from one part of the House to another.

Physical factors alone, however, do not completely determine House atmosphere, although physical factors are the easiest to define. There are also socio-cultural factors which determine House atmosphere, some of which can only be instantiated here. For example, part of the atmosphere seems to be created by the presence (or absence) of vital, long-term[5] student-student and/or student-faculty interaction. Some of the snack bars and lounge areas are used largely as waiting rooms for classes and/or strictly as eating places to be left as soon as one's business there has been completed; many (but not all) of the students in these House snack bars and lounges leave their coats or sweaters on while sitting, they do not put their books down, and their posture and non-verbal behavior indicate readiness to leave the area the instant they have completed their business there. In contrast, other House snack bar and lounge areas, while of course also serving the transient functions of waiting, also serve the functions of providing a place where students study together, do homework together, sit and watch other people walking by, etc. Occasionally in these Houses, students and teachers sit together in lounges and snack bars in a sort of mini-classroom situation in which there is some teaching going on. It is also in these Houses that one

[4] From the faculty and staff point of view, the separation by levels of House and Division may possibly be disadvantageous and may possibly lead to difficulties in House-Division communication; however, remember that this report attempts to look through the student's eyes.

[5] "Long-term" in this case refers not to long-standing relationships, but rather to those interactions of sufficient duration and intensity to require a closing conversational structure (see Davidson, 1975).

feels free to sit on the floor, which can be taken as another indicator of the degree to which the House has managed to create a "home" atmosphere. In other words, in those Houses, Einstein and Bernstein, in which student life seems to be more intense, the use of the snack bar and lounge space is somewhat different than in the other Houses, and it is this differential use of space which contributes to the differences between the Houses in the type of atmosphere created.[6] This different use of space itself rests on other factors, perhaps differences in the composition of the student House population, differences in the nature of the subject matter studied in each House, and differences in the quality of faculty-student interaction.

[6]It should not be taken that these differences are absolute; i.e., in all Houses, there are some students using the snack bar and lounge areas as waiting rooms or strictly as eating places, and, in contrast, students who are using the spaces for other activities, such as long-term interactions; I am here referring to differences in the degree to which the House lounges and snack bars serve these different functions.

3. The invisible student

One of the original purposes of this investigation was to define and describe the role of the student vis-a-vis faculty, staff, and administration members. One of the components of any social role with respect to another complementary social role is that of interaction between the role occupants. In addition to observing interaction between students and faculty-staff-administration, I also inadvertently "passed" as a student several times,[7] and thereby gained some insight into how some but not all faculty, staff, and administration members interact with students. These observations will be grouped into two headings: (1) the nature of what Goffman (1961b) calls "unfocused interaction" between students and faculty-staff-administration, i.e., largely non-verbal interaction between faculty-staff-administration and the student-in-general, and (2) the nature of what Goffman calls "focused interaction," i.e., interaction between persons involving verbal behavior, i.e., between the faculty-staff-administration and the student-in-particular. This chapter will deal with faculty-staff-administration unfocused interaction with the student-in-general.

Often the most intriguing results of any type of research are those which are serendipitous. As I walked around in "student clothes," I expected to be inconspicuous, but I also expected to still be recognized by those who know me. I discovered to my complete surprise that those faculty, staff,

[7] I want to re-emphasize that at no time did I deliberately try to pass as a student.

and administration members who normally recognize me and greet me by name when I dress as a staff member how appeared not to recognize me at all dressed as a student, but rather literally looked straight through me.[8] From the sociology and psychology of perception it is known that (a) the perceiver first takes in the perceived object as a whole in one glance and then may or may not look further and in more detail, depending upon his or her initial perception, and (b) normal (i.e., non-psychotic) adults are constantly on the lookout for persons that they should say hello to or greet in some way; i.e., normal adults usually do not walk around intentionally not seeing others whom they know in some capacity and whom they should greet (whether or not they choose to greet them is of course another question). What this means is that the explanation that these faculty-staff-administration members who looked through me while I was dressed in student clothes simply did not "notice" me must be ruled out. They probably did notice me, but their first global impression was "student" and they therefore did not look further to see if it was in fact someone that they knew and normally would greet. It is in this sense that the student-in-general is sometimes "invisible." This invisibility was found throughout all Houses and throughout all levels of faculty, staff, and administration, with some systematic exceptions.[9] The exceptions were that House clerks, House advisors, and counselors, even those whom I did not know very well at that time,

[8]The existential experience of standing no more than three feet away from a faculty member with whom I had lunched the week before and having that faculty member look straight through me is of course absolutely indescribable.

[9]There were some individuals who would recognize me under any circumstance by virtue of extensive interaction, and when I use the term "systematic exceptions," I am of course excluding these individuals.

recognized me even through my student garb. A possible explanation for this difference may be the following: The categories of persons who were exceptions are those who by the nature of their positions, training, or whatever, deal with students largely on an individual basis.

The implications of the invisibility of the student-in-general are not at all clear cut; i.e., one cannot make generalizations that the phenomenon is entirely bad for the student. If, for example, the student has come from a high school in which the teachers and administrators were watchdogs to make sure that the student behaved properly, then the sense of freedom here at Cypress can be exhilarating, and students have commented specifically on this wonderful freedom. For another example, if a student hasn't turned in a term paper or is in some other way remiss, then he or she may not particularly want to be recognized by his or her teacher while out on campus. On the other hand, the phenomenon of the invisibility of the student-in-general does help to perpetuate the differential status structure, which will be described next.

4. The differential status system

So far we have been discussing the interaction or lack of it between faculty-staff-administration and the student in what Goffman (1961b) calls "unfocused interaction;" that is, before the actual verbal encounter begins. I shall now discuss and describe the nature of focused interaction between faculty-staff-administration and the student; i.e., once they start talking to each other, what is the interaction like and what are the status implications? Again, part of my observations came about because I inadvertently and unintentionally passed as a student and was talked to by faculty and staff as if I were a student before I had a chance to explain who I was; however, for this section, I have also relied on (a) discussions with students, (b) observations of interactions between students and faculty-staff-administration, e.g., in meetings, and (c) observations of how students have reacted to me as a staff member. The major finding is that there exists and is maintained throughout the various occasions of interaction a differential status system in which students are accorded lower status than faculty-staff-administration. It should not be thought that this differential status system is maintained only by faculty-staff-administration; in fact, as will be point out below, students also act in ways to maintain the status system. I shall first of all instantiate this differential status system and then discuss its implications for both students and faculty.

First of all, in those instances in which I inadvertently passed as a student in a focused interaction with a faculty-staff-administration member who did not know me personally, I was sometimes spoken to in a manner best described as neither kind nor unkind, neither friendly nor unfriendly, but

rather as parental. These sorts of interactions usually occurred when I was doing something or being somewhere normally off limits to students, e.g., trying to get into a locked staff room, or trying to get access to one of the locked stairways, or wandering back into the faculty office areas late in the day. In these cases, the faculty-staff-administration member would sometimes but not always ask me in the manner described above what I was doing there and what I needed. In one case, I had forgotten my key to a staff room, and the faculty member who talked to me did let me into the staff room. That is, this faculty member, thinking I was a student, did me a favor by letting me into a normally off-limits-to-students place, but all the while clearly maintaining the status difference through the type of verbal behavior described above. In other cases, faculty-staff-administration members, thinking I was a student in an off limits area, did try to eject me from the area until I explained who I was. The maintainence of these sorts of off limits areas through the types of interactions described above clearly indicates a differential status structure in which the student, who either must not be in those areas or must have a good reason for being there, is accorded lower status.

A further indication of the existence of this differential status structure is the observed behavior of students who sit of committees otherwise composed of faculty, staff, and administrators. With the exception of a few student government leaders, students generally sit very quietly at these meetings, usually not speaking. When they do decide to speak, they usually raise their hands and wait to be recognized before they start speaking, even though this may not be the normal procedure for that particular meeting, i.e., even though other committee members at that meeting feel free

to start talking without recognition. Finally, when students do speak (again with the exception of a few student government leaders), it is sometimes in a deferential tone of voice sometimes so low as to be inaudible. I have a tape on which a student, a husky, six-foot male, can barely be heard even though he was very close to a rather sensitive directional microphone.

A third indicator of the differential status system, and one which is in general a fairly good indicator, is that of how the student handles the naming problem. That is, faculty-staff-administrators call students by their first names; however, the student must decide how to call those members of the faculty-staff-administration with whom they are personally acquainted. The general solution[10] for the student in the absence of any further knowledge seems to be for the student to call faculty-staff-administration members by their titles plus last names. Two systematic exceptions (and remember the difference between idiosyncratic exceptions and systematic exceptions) seem to be that students sometimes call House advisors and House clerks by their first names. The fact that some House advisors are also faculty members then poses a further problem for the student. The students in those Houses with faculty House advisors report that they usually call their House advisor by his or her first name, although they

[10] There will be, of course, some idiosyncratic exceptions; for example, some faculty members may form relationships with students in which bilateral first-naming is obviously called for, and some faculty members make it a point to tell the student to use first names. On the other hand, some faculty members do not like students to call them by their first names and have complained to me about students who "step out of line" and call faculty-staff-administration members by their first names.

did not feel comfortable about doing it at first. Similarly, with a few idiosyncratic exceptions, students call members of the administrative staff by their titles plus last names, and those students with whom I have discussed this issue specifically have expressed discomfort at the idea of calling administrators by their first names. Furthermore, as a "second-order" observation (see page 4 of this Report), I discovered that students whom I asked to not call me by my title plus last name but rather by my first name felt very uncomfortable at doing so, and in fact in almost all cases resisted doing so. This resistance took the form of either (1) continuing to call me by my title plus last name, or (2) avoiding the naming procedure altogether. The naming situation is one of the cases in which the status differential is perpetuated by students as well as by some but not all faculty-staff-administration members.

A further indication of the existence of the differential status system and the perpetuation of it through the patterns of interaction can be seen in specific changes in students behavior towards me upon their discovering that I am a member of the staff; this phenomenon provides before-and-after comparisons. Students at Cypress are generally friendly and amenable to talking to people they don't know if they perceive these people as students like themselves. When students perceive me as another student, interactions with them proceed as normal interaction between equals; for example, they will initiate conversations, engage in joking behavior, and call me by my first name. When, however, they learn that I am not a student, there is an abrupt change in the quality of the interaction. From that point on, they will usually wait for me to initiate interaction, the conversation takes on a much more formal quality, and they will usually no longer address me by my

first name.[11] Thus abrupt change in interactional behavior clearly illustrates the differences in the way in which students interact with other students compared with how they interaction with faculty-staff-administration. Since the same interactant (myself) is involved in both the before- and after-phases, the differences in behavior cannot be attributed merely to differences in personality, but rather must be attributed to differential norms of interaction, where such norms again serve to uphold the differential status system. Furthermore, this seems to be an instance in which the student's behavior reinforces the status system, but one must remember that some faculty-staff-administration members also act in ways to support the system.

One should not make the mistake of assuming that this differential status system is necessarily good or bad. It does seem to serve certain functions for both faculty-staff-administration and students. First of all, the maintainence of social distance may be desirable from the student's point of view, since, in general, formalized secondary relationships are in some ways much more predictable than close primary relationships. For example, a teacher who is also a friend may make more demands on a student than a teacher whom the student knows only as a teacher.[12] From the teacher's point of view, the maintainence of some social distance is also desirable, since at some point the teacher must stop being a friend and start being a

[11] Rapport was usually rather difficult to re-establish, and in some cases was only re-established after reassurances to the student that I have no teaching, grading, or administrative power.

[12] I am in no way implying that teachers actually do this, but rather that some students to whom I have talked perceive this as a possibility.

person with the power to grade the student. Furthermore, with respect to maintainence of distance between students and administration members, students are probably more comfortable with such a distance, since they generally perceive administration members as being very powerful (see next chapter).

5. Student perceptions of administration

With the exception of a few student government leaders, students in general perceive the administration at Cypress as being extremely powerful in largely unknown, almost mysterious ways. That is, the student knows that his or her teacher has specific grading power; in contrast, administrative power is felt to be diffuse and probably greater than that of the teacher. The most senstive probing on my part was not able to obtain more specific characterizations of this perceived administrative power, probably because (1) very few students come into contact with administrators and therefore do not personally know them from interactional experience, and (2) students are not quite sure what administrators do and therefore are not sure how the administrators could influence a student's academic life. Furthermore, all administrators are perceived as having this power, with the President having the most.

Given that the students perceive administration as having this sort of power, then the students also perceive that their best course of action with respect to interacting with members of the administration may be to avoid interaction altogether or at least as much as possible. Students expressed this as maintaining a low profile, staying out of the administration's way, staying out of trouble, etc. These expressions suggest that students perceive the possible effects of administration on their careers as students as being largely negative; i.e., they seemed to be afraid of what the administration will do <u>to</u> them rather than being able to think in terms of what the administration can do <u>for</u> them. Again, the most delicate probing was unable to obtain more specific information on exactly what students think

might be done to them by the administration, and furthermore, I came across no cases in which a student had actually been "done in" by the administration (or who at least was willing to tell me about it). These perceptions of administration here as an agent of possible punishment may come from several sources: general beliefs of the students subculture, students' experiences with punitive high school administrators, or students' experiences at their places of work with management. In a few cases, students who had been in prolonged contact with administrators, as, for example, a student of a class taught by an administrator, did perceive that administrator as being less threatening, suggesting that part of the student image of administrators as powerful and punitive may come from lack of student-administration contact on a relatively informal basis; however, such contact may be hard to come by, since interaction is in the first place a negative experience for students by virtue of their belief systems.

6. Student perceptions of the House Plan

Student perceptions of the House Plan and of the Houses vary widely. The purpose of this section of the Report is to indicate and describe these varying perceptions, but not to indicate the relative proportions of students holding these percepts; the latter can be obtained in future survey research.[13] This section, then, will be a listing of the ways in which students see the House Plan and the House. Please note that the order in which list items appear does not indicate either relative importance or relative frequency. Furthermore, the categories are not mutually exclusive; a student may feel that the House serves several of the following functions.

(a) The House as meeting place. Some students perceive the House as a geographical location in which the probability is quite high that they will run into somebody they would not otherwise see. That is, of all the places on campus, the House is perceived as one of the very few places in which one can more or less count of running into friends, acquaintances, dates, etc., without having prearranged a time to meet outside of class. For single students this may be a particularly valuable function, especially if there is no other place in their lives which serves this function.

(b) The House as center of activities. Some students perceive the House as the locus of out-of-class activity,[14] whether or not these activities are

[13] This is a good instance of the necessity for multi-method research; note that while participant observation research alone cannot indicate the proportions of students, survey research alone could not have in the first place obtained a list of student perceptions of the House and the House Plan.

[14] This function should be kept separate from the first, since students who use the House as a meeting place may not necessarily participate in any of that House's activities.

class-related or unrelated to classroom concerns. For example, one student spends several hours a week in a House snack bar, engaged in activities apparently unrelated to classwork: socializing, relaxing, talking, etc. Furthermore, the perception of the House as the center of activities may or may not have to do specifically with House-sponsored activities; some students do not participate in any House-sponsored activities, but they nonetheless perceive and use their House as sort of a "home away from home." On the other, some students perceive the House specifically as the initiator and sponsor of almost all campus activities.

(c) The House as the place where records are kept. Some students perceive the House as serving as a location where their records are kept, i.e., as sort of an arm of the Registrar's Office, and this is perceived as a convenience. In some cases, it apparently makes the process of registration appear to be less frightening and less complicated by virtue of the fact that the records are localized. Students in general perceive administrative and registration activities as involving endless amounts of red tape; having their records right there in the House makes this process appear somewhat less complicated and more accessible.

(d) The House as abstract concept. Some students perceive the House Plan and the House as an abstract concept without concrete reality. They either appear not to understand the purpose of the House Plan, or they understand its purpose but do not think they need it. In any case, they appear to think of the House as a building in which they have most of their classes. This may be related to the fact that some students perceive the college in the first place as merely a place to attend classes and

nothing more, and they find the attempts to make it something more either amusing or annoying.[15]

(e) The House as the location of the counselor. Some students perceive the House as the place where their counselor can be found. What this in turn means depends upon how they perceive the role of the counselor, and these perceptions range from feeling that the counselor's only function is to sign the schedule card to feeling that the counselor's role is to help them in all aspects of stuient life. Reported experiences with counselors range from "I only see him or her to get my card signed" to "I would have dropped out of school if he or she hadn't been right there in the House."

7. Afterword

This report has been an attempt to describe some but not all of the facets of the student experience here at Cypress through the student's eyes. The reader is again reminded that this Report was specifically written to describe the perceptions not of students who are outstanding in some way, e.g., as student government leaders, but rather those of students who are "just plain students." The reader is further reminded that insofar as this Report deals with perceptions, some of the percepts may or may not be correct or in agreement with the reader's values; therefore, the proper way to have read this in order to have obtained a good understanding is through the suspension of one's own value judgments.

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